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common ground

FREE MAGAZINE

Walk in my dream

Mike Stevens making music and miracles with indigenous youth

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Our cover

For musician Mike Stevens, a visit to Sheshatshiu in Labrador was a life-altering event. Meeting the youth in this impoverished Innu community inspired him to create ArtsCan Circle, a non-profit organization dedicated to honouring indigenous culture and helping foster a love of music in kids in aboriginal communities across Canada. Stevens' commitment to this work is profound. Readers can lend their support at www.artscancircle.ca
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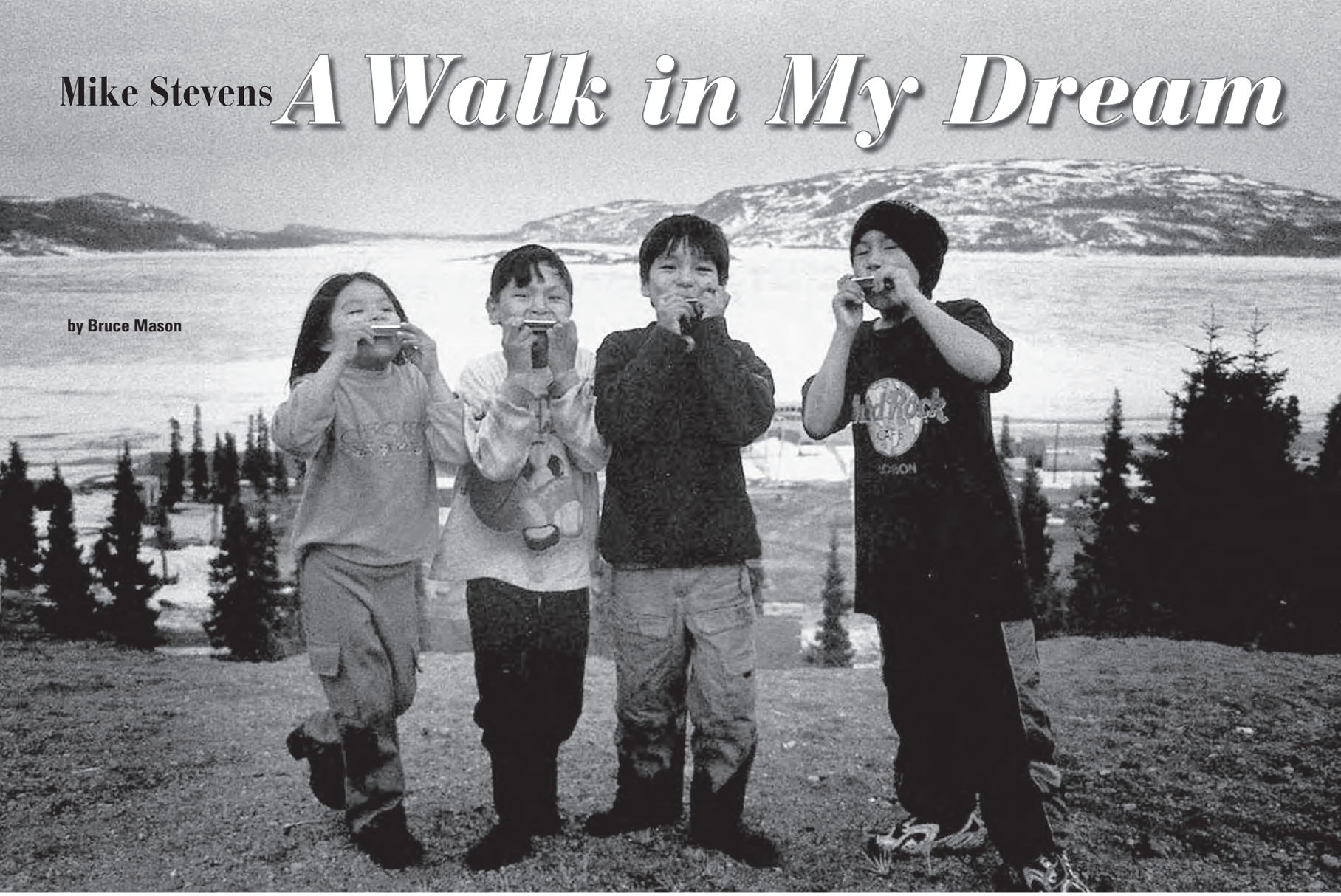
Mike Stevens *A Walk in My Dream*

by Bruce Mason



Life was inextricably transformed for Stevens and his unlikely audience, touching off a 13-year mission packed with lessons, insights and hope.

> There has been a lot of negative press about these communities, but the real story is inside the youth that live there. They continue to overcome amazing obstacles – things that would make many of us just give up. They have something really important for all of us to hear and learn from.

Nothing could have prepared Mike Stevens – or almost anyone else – for Sheshatshiu (pop. 1,500), the largest Innu community in Labrador. Innu means "human being," although they have been treated as anything but. These unique, non-status Aboriginals – political orphans – are among the last of First Nations on the continent to give up the hunt and their ancient, nomadic life. The disastrous trade-off, forced relocation and impossible transition plunged them into the depths of abject poverty and rampant alcoholism. They were stripped bare of their pride, independence and culture, with the caribou herds – their prime source of food and clothing – ravaged by mining, hydroelectric dams and ubiquitous low-flying NATO training planes.

In 2000, Stevens was en route on a tour to entertain peacekeepers in Bosnia with stopovers in remote Goose Bay, Labrador and Alert on Ellesmere Island. At the first appearance in Goose Bay, he played a song for troubled youth in nearby Sheshatshiu, whose crisis had surfaced in international news flashes. The music dedication "touched a raw nerve'" in the silent, white audience. After the performance, someone in the audience offered him a ride – if he could 'sneak away' – to Sheshatshiu, the village with the country's highest suicide rate.

"Driving along the gravel road was like slipping off the edge of Canada into a third-world parallel universe," says Stevens. "There were crosses – too many crosses – some with kids' toys attached, marking places where people had died, too often at their own hands. Arriving in the village, I saw mounds of bulldozed houses and more memorials where kids had set themselves ablaze, sniffing gas.

"A piss-stained mattress covered in tarps was where they looked after each other, rather than sleep six to a bed in buildings not much bigger than garden sheds, housing as many as 12 people. The 'houses' have taps and toilets, but no running water. It's cold, often way below zero and I remember, in some places, my feet breaking through crusts of snow into knee-deep sewage, not wanting to touch my face, keeping my hands away from my eyes. It was dangerous. There was TB,

Hep A and seriously ill people everywhere. With virtually no way to make a living, junk food was all that was affordable.

"No one should have to live in such conditions. Kids were hurting, anaesthetizing themselves from pain, constant boredom and loneliness that we know so little about and are unable to really feel. But I also played in the school where beautiful, incredible kids, super smart and artistic, loved music. They're a tremendous untapped resource with lots to say and teach to the rest of us as they find their voices."

Fear is just one of the conflicting emotions Mike vividly recalls from his first face-to-face encounter with Indigenous youth in Sheshatshiu. They were congregated around an open fire, inhaling gas in deep, round-the-clock gulps from plastic garbage bags, gripped tightly in fists to their faces.

"I was scared, really scared and nervous," he remembers the pivotal moment. "They were kids, but could have been thugs holding gasoline near fire. They might have said 'screw off' to a goofy looking white stranger who had no business being there, driven by a need for a connection and engagement to begin to understand and maybe even help."

So the virtuoso harmonica player did what he does best – play music. During the first bars of *Amazing Grace*, some of the curious sniffers stopped their incessant inhaling to start a conversation. Thankfully, snippets of it were captured on video, the centrepiece of a compelling documentary – *A Walk in My Dream* – that deserves and demands the widest possible audience and action. Experience the incident at www.mikestevensmusic.com/artscan and share the link.

Life was inextricably transformed for Stevens and his unlikely audience, touching off a 13-year mission packed with lessons, insights and hope for a Canada that in his words has "screwed up."

"Everything changed in a heartbeat, right down to the level of my DNA, especially my reason for playing music," Mike reports. "It was raw, real. I had a pounding migraine. My face burned from the fumes and I haven't slept the same way since. Something worked. Music briefly opened the doors on their chests. I knew then that I would never again play just to entertain, to make people feel good."

In a nanosecond his meteoric music career spun from its plotted trajectory and high-powered orbit.

Video and reports of his adventure had been sent south to mainstream media outlets. When he touched down in Alert, CBC Radio's *As It Happens* requested a national phone interview. Stevens says, "It was like scraping open a recent wound. I was still shook up and ranted for 10 minutes that something had to be done, asking people to donate instruments that I would personally pick up for the school."

Arriving in Bosnia and contacting home in Sarnia, Ontario, his wife informed him that hundreds of emails had been received, offering instruments. They would fill his house and a transport truck and Mike would – out of his own pocket – eventually hand out thousands of harmonicas.

He says, "I play emotions rather than notes and calculated lines. Percussively. Aggressively. It's the way I'm built. I've learned that my body, not the harmonica, is the instrument. That's one reason why musicians sound so different. I've had seven hernias, pushed my intestines through my stomach wall that many times because I use my mouth, throat and stomach to resonate overtones of notes. And I've totally destroyed that little valve that keeps food down, by using it for vibrato, bent it right back so if you tipped me upside down everything would flow out."

As a teenager, Stevens had qualified for the first Ironman in Hawaii, but dropped out because of injuries sustained during intense training. Turning to the tiny, unglamorous instrument he had toyed with as a child, driven to be the best he could be, he practised 12 hours a day in his parents' home in Sarnia, Ontario, absorbing soul and blues music drifting up from Detroit's Motown and Chicago's Southside.

His unique career path partly focused on bluegrass, duplicating the intricate, quick-paced patterns of the banjo and fiddle, catching the ear and attention of legendary masters of the genre. He was invited to play the Grand Ole Opry more than 300 times, unprecedented for a harmonica player. For years – with his wife Jane and son Colin – he left Sarnia on Thursday afternoons for Nashville to work the Opry, then drove all night to play shows in four different states, racing back each Monday to his day job. His trusty Volvo logged 760,000 km.

Stevens pioneered looping, a technique of adding to tracks of music in live performance, a process that mirrors his life experience. "Things happen that I don't understand until a circle is completed and I figure it out," he explains.

More instruments appeared after his initial visit to Sheshatshiu, requiring more trucks. And he discovered many other remote communities in desperate need. He was "going broke, getting depressed and not playing music" while staging workshops and creating recording studios to capture elders' stories as well as newly found voices and original compositions.

Realizing he was a musician and not an organizer, he founded the volunteer ArtsCan Circle in 2002. Some 70 musicians have held interactive workshops with youth-at-risk in places such as Mishkeegogamang, Pikangikum, Wabaseemoong and Natuashish. The mission is to promote self-esteem and self-expression, honour traditional culture and language, share and teach skills in the arts, facilitate creativity and positive recognition and bear witness and bring voice to the struggle and achievement of Indigenous youth and their communities.

"Arts Can is working, absolutely," reports Stevens. "I've made a life-long commitment to eight communities to go back and to go back and to go back. That's essential to earning their trust. We don't want to be yet another program or handout, a template conjured up in a distant boardroom somewhere and thrown at them in a photo op and news flash before blowing out again and moving on to something else.

continued p.8...

I also played in the school where beautiful, incredible kids, super smart and artistic, loved music.

... ***Dream*** *from p.7*

I've made a life-long commitment to eight communities to go back and to go back and to go back. That's essential to earning their trust.

> These people are dealing with heavy issues we've created through colonialism and genocide. We need to show them we care where they are and that what they are going through is real and tough.

"These people are dealing with heavy issues we've created through colonialism and genocide. We need to show them we care where they are and that what they are going through is real and tough. It's not something we need to fix or throw more money at. The elders know what has to be done. We have to shut up and listen. There's a huge payoff. For example, I've learned to honour silence in conversation rather than fill space."

Canada has little choice but to get its act together. Aboriginal people are the fastest growing segment of the population and a wasted, precious resource. In Sheshatshiu, 50 percent of the community is under the age of 18. There, the Innu have recently taken control and created a spectacular high tech K-12 facility built on the educational model that works for them and is the heart of the community.

"If there's one thing I would like everyone who reads this to know – and do – it's this: When you see an Aboriginal person, on the street, or wherever, say 'Hello!' It's that simple. That's where it starts. By listening. Building respectful relationships. Even if it means stepping outside your comfort zone," advises Mike Stevens.

Mike Stevens is a modest family man with immense talent, unbridled honesty and passion. He continues to earn an international reputation as one of the most innovative, versatile, soulful and selfless musicians on the planet. Mike has lost track of the number of albums he has recorded; 10 are available on his website (www.mikestevensmusic.com). A new recording with Okaidja Afroso – Ghana wooden xylophone (gyil) virtuoso – will be out in December (Borealis records).

Mike volunteers with the Peter Gzowksi Invitational for Literacy (www.pgicanada.ca/) and has performed – and given away harmonicas – in every province and territory in Canada. "Peter was someone who got it," Mike says. "He understood what people need to find their voice and is remembered as a friend, not a celebrity. And he knew firsthand that the North is the heart and soul of Canada."

Mike is the founder of ArtsCan Circle, a non-profit organization that brings artists and indigenous Canadian youth to-gether in creative expression. ArtsCan now includes workshops in theatre, visual arts, storytelling and more. To donate an instrument, stage a benefit and help grow this highly successful program, visit www.artscancircle.ca; $25 will provide paintbrushes and canvas to youth at risk. There are many more options available, including donating air miles.

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of **Our Clinic**. brucemason@shaw.ca

Invented invasions and the next cluster bomb of deceit

The storm clouds are gathering. US war ships laden with cruise missiles circle towards Syria-Iran like robotic sharks. Invading Syria – like Iraq and Afghanistan before – is another act in the American Empire's theatre. They are hell-bent on dominating the Middle East along their way to controlling the world's food, water and energy, through military enforced, US Dollar Denominated monopolies.

All it takes for a country to be bombed is to stand in the way of the Empire. Iraq's heresy was to stop trading crude oil in US dollars. Another capital offence is refusing payment in US Treasury bonds (IOUs with limited redeemability) for debt owed by America in exchange for a country's raw material exports. Doesn't seem fair, does it? That's because it isn't. Unwittingly, we fund these crimes against humanity through our taxes and at the gas pump.

The first victim of war is always the truth, though the script and players change. By the time you read these words, the USA will likely be attacking another non-compliant nation. Whether it was for bananas, minerals, a canal zone or pipelines, many countries have been bombed directly by the USA since WWII (see list). Other forms of punishment are doled out via third party coups, assassins, allies or mercenaries.

Cruise missiles are not defensive tools; they are for stealth – the first strike offensive, weapons of mass destruction. Describing them as "surgical" "clean, accurate and precise," America wants us to believe they have the best of intentions for saving children, helping women's rights… whatever emotional hook they can play. But no human being would find it acceptable to have families killed by this deadliest of American exports – missile democracy – except for psychopathic Big Oil.

History shows us not to trust anything these warmongers say. They "stay on message" and manipulate people because we tend to believe what is repeated. The mass media will repeat incessantly, "There is this monster over there and he must be stopped at all costs." When dollars don't work, the drones are sent in.

The following is from the official website of William Blum (williamblum.org), who left the US State Department in 1967, abandoning his aspiration of becoming a Foreign Service Officer because of his opposition to the Vietnam-American War. Blum became the founder and editor of the *Washington Free Press*, DC's first alternative newspaper.

United States bombings of other countries

It is a scandal in contemporary international law, don't forget, that while "wanton destruction of towns, cities and villages" is a war crime of long standing, the bombing of cities from airplanes goes not only unpunished but also virtually unaccused. Air bombardment is state terrorism, the terrorism of the rich. It has burned up and blasted apart more innocents in the past six decades than have all the anti-state terrorists who ever lived. Something has benumbed our consciousness against this reality. In the United States we would not consider for the presidency a man who had once thrown a bomb into a crowded restaurant, but we are happy to elect a man who once dropped bombs from airplanes that destroyed not only restaurants but the buildings that contained them and the neighbourhoods that surrounded them. I went to Iraq after the Gulf war and saw for myself what the bombs did; "wanton destruction" is just the term for it.

– C. Douglas Lummis, political scientist

The above was written in 1994, before the wanton destruction generated by the bombing of Yugoslavia, another in a long list of countries the United States has bombarded since the end of World *continued p.38…*

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GMOs suck

The United Republic of Soybeans: Take two

"The United Republic of Soybeans." That's the patronizing moniker given to the entire Southern Cone – comprising the countries of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia – by the Syngenta Corporation in a 2003 advertisement... It's an open statement of the neocolonialist fervour with which these companies are attempting to dominate this region of the world.

In 2012, the agribusiness transnationals really stepped up their campaign to control these countries and their institutions. They launched new genetically engineered (transgenic or GE) crops involving increased health and environmental hazards because of the agrotoxins (pesticides and herbicides) that have to be applied with them. They also lobbied for policy changes that are without precedent, except for the initial GE onslaught in the second half of the 1990s. This new corporate drive comes in a troubling new context in which almost all the governments of the region (at least until June of last year) were "progressive" critics of neoliberalism. These governments have begun to rectify some of the neoliberal policies adopted in the 1990s, with the government taking a more active role in regulating the economy and providing for social welfare, education and healthcare.

Ultimately, what we are looking at is a social and environmental catastrophe settling like a plague over the entire region. Wherever you live, you cannot ignore it.

However, in all this time, the prevailing model of agricultural production has not changed. There has been no official concern about the problems caused by the widespread planting of transgenic soybeans and the high levels of agrotoxins this requires. On the contrary, this model continues to be consolidated and defended by all of the region's governments, which have adopted it as government policy in every case. At best – and only when societal pressure becomes too great – they have given slapdash consideration to the problems of agrotoxin poisoning, displacement of peasants and first peoples, land concentration, and loss of local production. But these are considered "collateral impacts..."

In previous issues of *Against the Grain* (1, 2, 3), we have criticized the soy incursion as serving to consolidate the agribusiness model of production. The Southern Cone has become the region with the highest concentration of GE crops in the world and, in a closely related development, the region with the highest per capita application of agrotoxins...

The profound impacts of the agribusiness model know no borders between rural and urban. In rural areas and outer suburbs they are measured in terms of agrotoxin poisoning, displaced farmers (who swell the ranks of the urban poor), ruined regional economies, correspondingly high urban food prices and contamination of the food supply. Ultimately, what we are looking at is a social and environmental catastrophe settling like a plague over the entire region. Wherever you live, you cannot ignore it.

The handful of people and companies responsible for this chain of destruction have names: Monsanto and a few other biotech corporations (Syngenta, Bayer) leading the pack; large landowners and planting pools that control millions of hectares (Los Grobo, CRESUD, El Tejar, Maggi, and others); and the cartels that move grain around the world (Cargill, ADM, and Bunge). Not to mention the governments of each of these countries and their enthusiastic support for this model. To these should be added the many auxiliary businesses providing services, machinery, spraying and inputs that have enriched themselves as a result of the model.

To put some numbers on the phenomenon, there are currently over 46 million ha of GE soy monoculture in the region. These are sprayed with over 600 million litres of glyphosate and are causing deforestation at a rate of at least 500,000 ha per year.

From www.grain.org

Meet Dr. Fran Fisher

Fran has been an AASECT certified counselor for 15 years and an RN for 42 years.

When she was faced with the trauma of her son abruptly committing suicide in her own home, she turned to Satyen Raja and Harmony Integration. After experiencing it's immediate effectiveness, and soon after training in the techniques, she has begun to use Harmony Integration successfully in her own practice.

"Satyen ran what he called the 'Trauma Release Process' and in less than one hour he took me through the awful events of that night and the agony disappeared, but even more amazingly helped me connect on both a physical and spiritual level with my son which helped me resolve some of the agony and despair of the trauma.

"This is the message I now tell my clients as I use these techniques in my practice: the work we will do today is just about to save you hundreds if not thousands of dollars but even more importantly than that, you will actually resolve your problems in hours rather than months or years (*if ever*) and live the lives you were meant to live..."

-- Dr. Fran Fisher

"For someone dealing with any trauma, I can only speak my truth from my own experience, it works and it works fast and it sticks, it is not a passing fad."

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Healing power of tea

by Johann T. Baptistè

Tea has been widely celebrated throughout history for its healing and wellness benefits. However, while many people are familiar with the positive health effects of green and black teas – such as their anti-cancer and anti-cholesterol properties – herbal teas tend to go unnoticed.

What are healing green-herbal infusion teas?

Herbal teas can be made from leaves, flowers, roots, bark, seeds, fruits, berries and spices. They were widely sought after throughout the ancient world. In ancient Egypt, China and India, for example, herbal teas were enormously popular due to their medicinal, restorative and spiritual benefits. The Romans eventually catalogued this ancient knowledge of herbs and spices through a collection of 40 books outlining their benefits and uses, while the Arabs preserved and expanded upon that knowledge during the Middle Ages. When combined with green tea, the resulting infusion can be very healing and delicious!

An holistic approach

Unfortunately, today's society tends to minimize holistic approaches to health and wellness, in favour of treating immediate causes. While this approach will certainly address the manifested aspects of the body's *dis-ease*, the use of healing teas in the overall approach to wellness is not only a safe complement to other treatment options, but it can also serve to prevent further problems.

Some benefits of green-herbal infusion teas

- Boosts the immune system
- Flushes toxins from the body
- Increases energy
- Rejuvenates the mind
- Decreases cholesterol
- Relieves stress
- Promotes relaxation and healthy sleep
- Contains powerful antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties.

For a blissful tea experience, visit the Rumi Rose Garden tea house, 3660 E. Hastings Street. There is also a beautiful meditation space upstairs.

How to brew herbal tea

There are several ways to make an herbal tea – the most common methods being infusions and decoctions. A green-herbal infusion is made by pouring boiling water over loose-leaf tea (or a tea bag) and allowing the tea to steep for approximately 3-5 minutes. This allows time for the healing properties of the herbs to combine with the green tea and become infused into the water. The root or bark material can be gently boiled, then poured through a strainer into the pot or mug of tea.

Look for quality

Due to the large variance in the quality of teas on the market, make sure that the company from which you purchase your tea provides detailed information about the tea products available for purchase. Also, try supporting local companies with a footprint in the community. If the company cares enough about the community it works in to get involved, you can feel more assured they also care about your overall wellbeing – and not just their bottom line.

Enjoy your healing teas!

Please note that this article should not be used to contradict medical advice. Consult with your health professional with any concerns you may have or before making changes to your diet.

Johann T. Baptistè is a Servant & Tea Consultant at Rumi's Tea House.
For more information, visit www.rumirose.com. Email: info@rumirose.com or call 604-558-4455.

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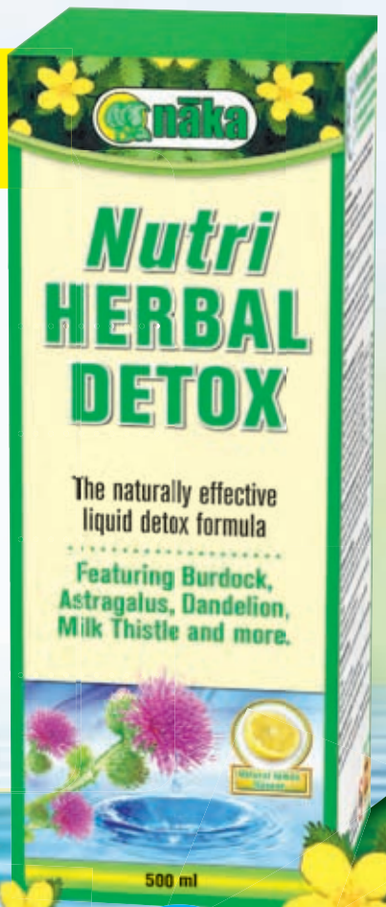

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Human Peace Sign event at UBC needs your body

Human Peace Sign formed by 625 people at the Surrey event in 2012.

Photo by Evan Seal. Courtesy Surrey/North Delta Leader.

On Saturday, September 21, Kindness Is Key *Heartmind Wisdom* co-authors Joyce Ross and Patricia Connor are hoping that 5,815 peace ambassadors will gather at Matthews Field at UBC to form the largest human peace sign.

Organized in support of the United Nations International Day of Peace, the event includes live entertainment (noon to 5pm), the Guinness World Record attempt and an aerial photo at 2pm.

The idea of hosting the "Largest Human Peace Sign" concert came to Ross while researching the origin of the peace symbol, designed in the late 1950s as a logo for the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Excited by an article about New Yorkers forming a record-sized 5,814-human peace sign at the 2008 Ithaca Festival, Ross emailed Guinness World Records. A week later she received the official challenge of 5,815 participants. Unfortunately, Ithaca's record is unofficial because it was never verified by Guinness.

Although their 2012 attempt in Surrey for the Largest Human Peace Sign fell thousands short, event organizers Ross and Connor are confident that switching to a weekend day will ensure the world record. Their primary intention, however, is propagating global peace, love, hope and kindness.

As many of the performers are from the World Kindness Concert and others regularly volunteer their time to Kindness Rocks – two other Greater Vancouver initiatives – Mayor Gregor Robertson has proclaimed the date "Kindness Day."

The event opens with a blessing of the land and drumming by Métis Elder Derrick Whiteskycloud, followed by a keynote address by Joseph Roberts, publisher and senior editor of *Common Ground* magazine and the primary organizer of Vancouver's Walk for Peace. Brock Tully, founder of the World Kindness Concert, will MC the event.

Speakers include Ted Kuntz of Peace Begins with Me and Tim Maloney, National Director of Mercy Ships Canada. Performers include local greats Denise Hagan, Jonas & Jeanette, Michael Vincent, Ron Irving, Ranj Singh, Leora Cashe, Clare Brett, Gina Williams and the Green Room Band. Children's entertainer Jill Conway will lead the group in song and dance as colourful clowns delight kids of all ages.

The Vancouver Food Bank Society will be on-site and attendees are asked to bring non-perishable items. Net proceeds from the sale of calendars created from the event are donated to Mercy Ships Charity Hospital Foundation, which provides free medical and dental care to the less fortunate in Africa. (www.mercyships.ca)

To encourage the disuse of disposable bottles, Aqua Blue Water Filtration will provide filtered water and everyone is encouraged to bring a reusable drinking container.

Ross and Connor are not the only ones excited about propagating peace via attempting the world's largest human peace sign. Though not officially documented in record books, in 2009, 12,000 students at Quezon National High School in Lucena, Philippines, formed the *biggest* human peace sign. In March 2012, students at Kennesaw State University in Georgia tried for the record. Hawaii is also in on what is becoming a worldwide peace initiative, with 2,100 participants at their record attempt in Waikiki this past January.

"It was magical," says Ross, recalling last year's event. "Everyone was singing John Lennon's *Imagine* as we stood shoulder-to-shoulder forming the peace symbol, each making the two-finger peace sign as our arms stretched skyward, when the wing of the plane carrying the event photographer dipped. The crowd cheered and I thought, 'They're having so much fun and aren't even aware they are answering the prayers of their brothers and sisters in Africa who rely on Mercy Ships Charity Hospital.'" ‹

For a complete list of performers, visit www.humanpeacesign.com To volunteer, email kindnessiskey@hotmail.com or phone 604-764-0140.

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Salmon Confidential (Canada, 71 min.)
Riding shotgun with biologist Alexandra Morton, documentarian Twyla Roscovich details the dangerous viruses that are flourishing in BC's wild salmon and our government's efforts to suppress evidence of this epidemic. An alarming document of our elected officials working against our best interests, this exposé is a must-see for every British Columbian.

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A River Changes Course
(Cambodia/USA, 83 min.)
A sobering look at how encroaching modernity is threatening the livelihoods and traditions of three families in different parts of Cambodia, Kalyanee Mam's vérité documentary "handles its material so deftly that you can't help but become an active participant in the journey."—*The AU Review.*
Winner, World Cinema Jury Prize: Documentary, Sundance 2013.

Big Men (USA, 99 min.)
Examining the human cost and collateral damage of oil drilling in Africa, Rachel Boynton's documentary "should come tagged with a warning: The side effects of global capitalism may include dizziness, nausea and seething outrage... *Big Men* digs in deep and spins a sprawling tale—a real-life *Chinatown* or *There Will Be Blood.*"—*Variety*

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Pete's protein puzzle

After his partner Sue adopted a plant-based diet, Pete decided to give it a try. He thoroughly enjoyed the hearty, nourishing meals that Sue prepared on weekends and the environmental and ethical reasons behind this diet made sense to him. Yet on weekdays he found that his own vegetarian meals or the ones he ate in restaurants or at work were far from satisfying. He sometimes felt like he hadn't actually had a meal. He kept cookies in his desk drawer and glove compartment and wondered if he was getting the necessary nutrients, especially protein.

photo ©Vera Handojo

Together, Pete and Sue came up with solutions. They began a weekend cooking project in which he learned chef skills and she acted as sous-chef. He liked quick breakfasts and whole grain toast with peanut butter or almond butter and sliced banana gave him a much better start to the day than white toast, margarine and jam. Sometimes he had hot or cold cereal topped with sunflower seeds, nuts, berries and fortified soymilk.

He soon became a stir-fry expert, finding that the possible combinations were endless and that his higher intake of vegetables and brown rice was filling and contributed significant amounts of protein. He added chickpeas or marinated tofu to stir-fries and discovered high protein convenience foods such as seitan, veggie "meats," hummus and edamame. He tried several brands of veggie burgers and canned soups until finding favourites. Pete began to enjoy what he learned about shopping and cooking. He read labels and stocked up on ready-made vegetarian chili and bean and lentil soups. He added soup making to his skills; black bean soup and pea soup became favourites.

At the company cafeteria he asked the chef if chili and bean or lentil soup could be added to the menu. The chef had received other such requests and complied. Near his office, Pete found a Chinese restaurant with tofu dishes, a Mexican restaurant with pinto and black beans and an East Indian restaurant providing delicious dahl and chickpea entrees and a wealth of vegetable dishes and flat breads. It soon became clear that beans, peas and lentils were keys to sustaining energy levels through the afternoon.

When business trips took him to other cities, Pete explored options through www.happycow.net, adding an App for this website to his mobile phone. Soon Pete was going between meals without the drop in blood sugar that made him resort to cookies. He felt so strong and healthy that he started making regular visits to the gym, added muscle to his arms and torso and took in his belt a few notches.

Getting enough protein is easily accomplished with a plant-based diet. Yet menu planning can present challenges until people learn simple, tasty ways to include beans, peas, lentils and/or soy foods in their diets. These high-protein ingredients deliver iron, zinc, all the essential amino acids and other nutrients and they also help stabilize blood glucose. Beyond legumes, there is plenty of protein in vegetables, seeds, nuts and grains.

See the new e-book *Cooking Vegetarian* (Joseph Forest and Vesanto Melina, Harper Collins) for recipes for delicious, protein rich foods. For outstanding current nutrition information in print, see *Becoming Vegetarian* (Harper Collins) and *Becoming Vegan Express* (Book Publishing Co., 2013). Both books by B. Davis and V. Melina.

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Briefing Notes on Prescription Drugs

New drugs need a disease

Overactive Bladder meet Myrbetriq

Today, I found myself asking, "Should I go to the bathroom or should I revisit the ACDMC™, also known as Alan Cassels' "Disease-Mongering Checklist?"

If, like me, you are wondering whether you might be suffering from Overactive Bladder (OAB), you might be surprised to see that, according to the ACDMC™, OAB gets full marks as a fully mongered disease. Let's see how well it works.

1. The innocent question: "Could I have overactive bladder?"

Pure marketing and salesmanship, the 'innocent question' is found headlining websites and ads, designed to get any healthy person answering in the affirmative. A new site, www.Peeingproblem.ca, focuses the attention on OAB by asking, "Has peeing and peeing and peeing become a problem?" Geez, when you drink as much coffee as I do and make more than seven bathroom trips a day, maybe it *is* a sign of a medical problem. The 'innocent question' has done its job when you start wondering if you have the disease *du jour*. Dr. Google helps you do your research and you discover…

2. The dire-straits disease description

On the occasion of launching a new drug, this is how one manufacturer in Canada described OAB: "Overactive bladder (OAB) is a chronic, debilitating condition that can have a profound, negative impact on a patient's quality of life. Many patients with OAB are plagued by depression, experience a disruption in sleep, limit their social activity and experience a loss of control and decreased self-esteem." This cluster of symptoms would be a pretty severe case; most people suffering from the disease might only be concerned about finding the next bathroom. To be sure, you decide to fill out…

3. The self-screening questionnaire

How bothered have you been by frequent urination during the day? (Possible responses: not at all, a little, somewhat, a lot, etc.) How bothered have you been by nighttime urination? And so on. Eight questions like this, a quick printout of the answers and you're headed to the doctor with your self-screening questionnaire, certain you've got the disease for which she'll prescribe a pill. The doc might examine you, discuss your options and hand you a quick drug sample – provided by the generous drug company who makes OAB products – to close the deal.

4. The improbable prevalence

One of the biggest signals for classic disease mongering is the unbelievable rate of prevalence so that it appears the disease is everywhere affecting almost everyone. In April of this year, the drug company Astellas – makers of Myrbetriq (mirabegron), a new drug for OAB just launched in Canada – issued a press release saying, "An estimated 2.9 million Canadian men and women suffer from OAB symptoms." The Canadian Continence Foundation says that "as many as 3.3 million Canadians – nearly 10% of the population – experience some form of incontinence." What these estimates have in common is they blow in the same direction inflating the proposed numbers of people affected. What is the wind behind these estimates? A 2012 report found "nearly three quarters of epidemiological studies of OAB were funded by drug manufacturers." Nuff said. The clearest signal that disease mongering is happening is…

5. The perennial punchline: "See your doctor"

It's clear the pharmaceutical industry needs to convince physicians to start thinking about bladder activity in a medical way. Once they have done that, the easier part is getting you to see your doctor. After all, who else can write the

prescription for what ails you? Seeing your doctor wouldn't be a bad thing if the drugs were effective and made urinary messes a thing of the past.

6. Maybe this isn't a disease after all

The disease-mongers pushing overactive bladder leave little doubt that the list of annoying symptoms represents real, debilitating 'dis-ease'. Certainly, at the extreme end some people need medical help and they should get it. In his article in the *Huffington Post* last month, Dr. Richard Besdine wrote, "Urinary incontinence isn't a disease in its own right. It is caused by a combination of problems, habits and sometimes medications." He adds, "nearly 90% of women can get results from treatment for urinary incontinence but it usually will not require surgery or drugs." Also, a person's medications – some blood pressure pills and antidepressants, for example – might be causing the bladder problems. You might wonder how well the drugs might work so you look into...

7. Impressive effectiveness and safety of medications

One analysis of 94 clinical trials, funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality in the US, found only about one in five women who took an overactive bladder medication had their incontinence episodes cut by half or more. Which is to say, not much. If you normally pee 12 times a day and a daily pill reduces that to 11 times a day, would that classify as 'effective' in your mind? The clinical trial reports of a drug like the new mirabegron offer a reduction that amounts to about one less urination in a 24 hour period. The studies show that the placebo effects are great, providing some suggestion that it is the non-drug factors – such as a bladder diary – that might be delivering the goods in terms of avoiding incontinence. Disease mongerers tend to either forget to mention the side effects or downgrade them to a mere nuisance. But if a daily incontinence drug for one less trip to the bathroom each day is worth a dry mouth, constipation, stomach pain, heartburn and blurred vision, go for it. Hmm, but there are alternatives, right?...

8. The alternatives are AWOL

Disease mongers are always a little disingenuous when mentioning the alternatives for the medications used to treat the disease. In the case of OAB, the alternatives like bladder and pelvic floor training and so on are usually whipped through in a perfunctory fashion before you get to the real meat – the drugs – which must be paid for by someone so we see...

9. Politicization, petitioning and pushing

If the disease is that dire and the drugs so useful, they must be paid for by our health authorities. Right. So we need a campaign. Not all disease mongering results in politicization of drug coverage, but some does – that's where you're asked to write letters to elected representatives asking for the new drugs to be covered. Astellas Pharma Canada and its recently launched campaign www.itsurgent.ca tries to get BC residents worked into a froth so they will lobby for expanded access to OAB meds. If you're wondering who's behind these campaigns, well it's…

10. Astroturf patient groups

The National Association For Continence's (NAFC) supports a Bladder Health Awareness campaign. During "Bladder Health Week" (Nov 11-15, 2013), the group will try to "educate the public about treatment and management options for pelvic floor disorders," sponsored by, that's right, diaper, device and drug manufacturers. The astroturf groups, like the one represented by www.itsurgent.ca, feature testimonials such as the one from someone calling himself Dr. TW, who writes, "Because of my OAB, I am really tired because I am up at night voiding and therefore I am no longer riding my bike. Because I am unable to get my exercise, I am feeling sad and my wife thinks I am depressed." The testimonials are powerful and remind us there are real people facing real problems. There is no doubt that urinary incontinence can be a very embarrassing, difficult and emotional condition, but are things made any better when the pharmaceutical industry employs all the standard disease mongering tactics to convince many otherwise healthy people that their lives would be vastly improved if they took a drug?

Hmm, maybe not.

Alan Cassels wrote a little pink book, illustrated and written in verse called the **ABCs of Disease Mongering: An Epidemic in 26 Letters**. He welcomes all suggestions on new diseases that you think are being mongered. Pass your ideas on to him at alan@alancassels.com

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God's food plan

"And God said, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." (Genesis 1:29)

This bible quote runs through my head at harvest time as I gather in the seeds and fruit of my labours and express deep gratitude for the abundance of 'meat' in my little piece of 'Heaven on Earth.' Each year, the garden blesses us with bumper crops of fruits and vegetables, the crops different each year depending on weather conditions. This year, it's bumper crops of plums and berries.

Photo by Kristin Ross.

Strawberry spinach from seed nicked from Shakespeare's wife's garden

The pit of a wild plum somehow landed in my mixed border three years ago, but I didn't know what the resulting woody plant was until it fruited last year and I identified it as *Prunus americana*. This year, it grew into a sizeable tree that produced a massive crop of rosy-red plums known for excellent flavour and eating quality. So for three weeks in August, I was busy pitting and freezing this crop for plummy winter desserts.

Five years ago, a friend gave me a packet of woodland strawberry seeds (*Fragaria vesca*). Until then, I'd only propagated strawberries from offsets so what a surprise to discover these tiny seeds produced strawberries only three months after germination. I've been growing them in a half-oak barrel – and as a border plant in semi-shade – and they sail through winter producing the sweetest, impossible to resist berries from mid-June to mid-November. What more could you ask for than an attractive ground cover that grows in full sun and part shade, is drought tolerant and winter hardy and produces edible fruit?

I first spied the shiny-red fruits of Strawberry spinach (*Chenopodium capitatum*) in the restored garden at Anne Hathaway's cottage in Stratford-Upon-Avon. How could I resist a tiny pinch of seeds? This heritage 16th-century food plant now volunteers happily around my garden and continues to stop visitors in their tracks. Although small, the leaves are nutritious and can be steamed or used in salads, but the main feature here is the strawberry-like fruit, bound to inspire a conversation – perhaps even a play?

The plant that gets the prize for novelty is the mouse melon cucumber (*Melothria scabra* 1866). These unique cucumbers look like miniature watermelons and the tangy crunch makes the little fruits perfect in salads, stir fries, salsas or pickled. Tip: Try growing these fun little cucumbers with kids. Grow one plant in a one-gallon pot; fill with screened compost and feed with liquid seaweed to get the highest yields. Grow a few pots in a row and you'll get a curtain of vines dripping with these refreshing treats that kids – and adults – think are way cool!

I find it comforting to know there are strawberries that grow from seed in three months, plum trees that volunteer from pits and self-seeding spinach that has survived 400 years. I hope we never face a food crisis, but wouldn't it be great to spread these gifts from God around in case we ever do?

Carolyn Herriot is author of **The Zero-Mile Diet** and **The Zero-Mile Diet Cookbook** (Harbour Publishing). You can order the seeds mentioned in this article at www.seedsofvictoria.com

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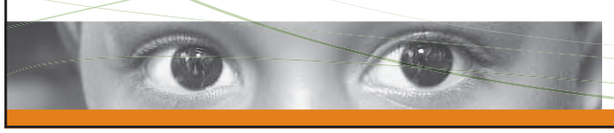

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Mac McLaughlin

ZODIAC

StarWise September 2013

"TO EVERY THING there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." (Ecclesiastes chapter 3.)

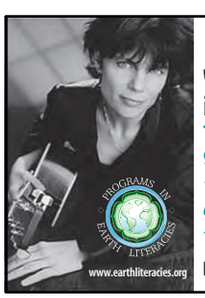
Astrology is God's handwriting through the stars. The movement of the planets decrees when certain events are destined to manifest in our lives according to the karma indicated in the birth chart itself. The astrologer's work is within deciphering what the stars are indicating and presenting that information in a positive and constructive manner. In traditional Western astrology, Saturn is known as a malefic energy bringing grief and suffering, while Jupiter brings joy and abundance. Mars represents anger and aggression, while Venus represents love and affection. Obviously, it would be nice to have Venus and Jupiter prominent in our birth charts. Moving along the same line of reasoning, it would seemingly be beneficial that Mars and Saturn had back seats and small parts to play in the unfolding of karmic energy designed by our past life thoughts and actions.

Timing is everything. As an example, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's birth chart is indicating a most difficult and potentially dangerous time. The full moon on September 19 will bring it all to light.

In Vedic Eastern astrology we find that, according to the positions and condition of the planets at our birth, Venus or Jupiter can become malefic energies, bringing their own form of grief and suffering. Saturn and Mars can become benefic forces that bring very dynamic and profound results when their time to shine arrives. To everything there is a season and a reason as to why we are compelled throughout our cosmic, karmic journey through time.

Timing is everything. As an example, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's birth chart is indicating a most difficult and potentially dangerous time. The full moon on September 19 will bring it all to light. The possibility of attacks is strong and his enemies will come out now. Keep in mind he is a man, a father and a husband and just as vulnerable as the rest of us. Changes in his personal life and relationships are indicated and health may be a concern. The above commentary is based on the birth time of 3:00AM. Even without the birth time, the prime minister will face a very trying time for the next two years, in which his popularity and leadership will be tested strongly. September is a busy and demanding month.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.



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ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19

Change is the only constant while Uranus transits Aries. You can't beat it so you might as well get with it. "Get with what," you might ask? Get with the universal plan that is unfolding at an astonishing rate of speed. September offers up all kinds of creative opportunities for love and happiness to manifest.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21

The Virgo new Moon on September 5 energizes your solar fifth house, which rules over topics such as love, romance, children and enterprise. The fifth house is a good karma house. It brings good returns when activated. This September is a time of striving and possibly struggling with conditions that are changing in dynamic fashion.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20

Family and home activities are featured. Land and real estate deals may come into play. Health is the key ingredient to happiness and success in the future. Now is the time to find the balance in all things. Resources increase, as do opportunities to expand in some way. Time with friends and family is indicated.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22

Step up, step forward and have no shame in your game. Beneficent Lord Jupiter casts his fine blessings your way throughout the year. You can gain significantly or lose majorly, in the sense of wasting your time and energy on frivolous pursuits. Do your best and the universe will respond in kind. Travel opportunities come up.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22

Mars, fiery brother of the Sun, makes his way through Leo until mid October. He brings energy and strength your way. Anger, accidents and fires are some of the typical Mars-type energies that come up when he's around. September could be intense, as Mars and Saturn square off affecting your Leo planets.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22

The Virgo new Moon on September 5 signals a fresh start as you experience your solar and lunar high of the year. The stars are lending excellent support and you can move easily towards your goals and objectives. Hard work and effort pay off and the sense of satisfaction that things are coming together brings contentment.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22

The new Moon on September 5 takes place in your solar twelfth house. You may be in a compassionate mood, reaching out to those that need your love and support. A busy September flies by in a blink of the eye. Seek a healthy lifestyle and find the balance in all things.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21

The full Moon on September 19 will have special significance for you. At the time of the full Moon, Venus, Saturn and Rahu (one of the navagrahas – nine planets – in Vedic astrology) conjoin in your sign. It is a time in which certain aspects of your life come to an end. You must weigh up what is real, what is true and what is of true value.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21

Let's see if we can get a handle on the types of energy you might experience in September. Topics such as inheritances and shared monies come into play. Career, education and travel sectors are hot and strongly activated. Home and career activities dominate throughout the month. A longing for something deeper manifests.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19

Your solar house of travel is strongly activated throughout September. Matters related to the higher mind, law, philosophy, education, publishing, religion and politics may be prominent. Jupiter casts his glance your way bringing opportunities for growth and advancement. There are opportunities for big mistakes to take place as well so be careful in your choices.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19

A career change could be in the works, as you grow increasingly frustrated with how things have been going. On another level, some Aquarians will reach a peak in their career status and will be honoured for their work and service. Do your best and leave the rest; it's the right mantra for the times.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20

The full Moon on September 19 takes place in your sign. Revelations and realizations come flooding in and you see the way to go. Concerns that you have been worried about come to a head. It's time to map out a new plan and the stars are lending a hand.

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Dialogue on inner purpose

The following dialogue condenses numerous conversations I have had with people who were looking for their true life purpose. Something is true when it resonates with and expresses your innermost Being, when it is in alignment with your inner purpose. This is why I am directing their attention to their inner and primary purpose first.

"I don't know exactly what it is, but I want some change in my life. I want expansion; I want to be doing something meaningful and, yes, I want prosperity and the freedom that comes with it. I want to do something significant, something that makes a difference in the world. But if you asked me what exactly I want, I would have to say that I don't know. Can you help me find my life purpose?"

Your purpose is to sit here and talk to me because that's where you are and that's what you are doing. Until you get up and do something else. Then that becomes your purpose.

"So my purpose is to sit in my office for the next 30 years until I retire or get laid off?"

You are not in your office now so that's not your purpose. When you do sit in your office and do whatever you do, then that is your purpose. Not for the next 30 years, but for now.

If caring for your children gives meaning to your life, what happens to that meaning when they don't need you and perhaps don't even listen to you anymore?

"I think there is some misunderstanding here. For you, purpose means what you are doing now; for me, it means having an overall aim in life, something big and significant that gives meaning to what I do, something that makes a difference. Shuffling papers in the office is not it. I know that."

As long as you are unaware of Being, you will seek meaning only within the dimension of doing and of future, that is to say, the dimension of time. And whatever meaning or fulfillment you find will dissolve or turn out to have been a deception. Invariably, it will be destroyed by time. Any meaning we find on that level is true only relatively and temporarily.

For example, if caring for your children gives meaning to your life, what happens to that meaning when they don't need you and perhaps don't even listen to you anymore? If helping others gives meaning to your life, you depend on others being worse off than yourself so that your life can continue to be meaningful and you can feel good about yourself. If the desire to excel, win or succeed at this or that activity provides you with meaning, what if you never win or your winning streak comes to an end one day, as it will? You would then have to look to your imagination or memories – a very unsatisfactory place to bring some meagre meaning into your life. "Making it" in whatever field is only meaningful as long as there are thousands or millions of others who don't make it so you need other human beings to "fail" so that your life can have meaning.

I am not saying here that helping others, caring for your children or striving for excellence in whatever field are not worthwhile things to do. For many people, they are an important part of their outer purpose, but outer purpose alone is always relative, unstable and impermanent. This does not mean that you should not be engaged in those activities. It means you should connect them to your inner, primary purpose so that a deeper meaning flows into what you do.

Excerpted from **A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose** by **Eckhart Tolle.** Reprinted by arrangement with Dutton, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc. Copyright © Eckhart Tolle, 2005.

Have faith in yourself

Faith is complete trust or confidence in someone or something. It is often used in a religious context, but here I shall consider it in a more generic sense. Life is filled with uncertainty and uncertainty can create anxiety or fear. Fear is a lack of faith, either in the world or in our ability to cope with the world.

In any given situation that is causing us worry, there are many ways things could turn out well and just as many ways things could turn out badly. Worriers tend to focus on all the worst-case outcomes and may even embellish them. The truth is that only one outcome will be realized in the end.

Stress is created not only by imagining a negative outcome, but then imagining all of the additional negative outcomes that will flow from the first one. It becomes a downward spiral that seems impossible to get out of. No wonder sleep is affected and stress chemicals flood the body. We are in fight or flight mode and nothing has even happened yet.

Since we cannot know what will happen in the end, we are better off if we put all our energy into having faith. We can choose to have faith in a positive outcome, but it is more important to have faith in the knowledge that *we will be okay* regardless of the outcome. We do not have control over external outcomes, but we do have control over how we deal with them.

The way to prevent ourselves from being intimidated by challenges and feeling vulnerable in the world is to strengthen our belief in ourselves and trust that our destiny is unfolding is a way that serves our highest good.

When we move into fear, it is often the inner child aspect of our being that is feeling overwhelmed. The strong, wise adult part of our being will figure it out and carry on, if we will let that part of ourselves be in charge.

It is also the ego aspect that wants to be in control and have things go its way. The soul understands that life is all about change and stepping up to challenges for that is how we grow. The way to prevent ourselves from being intimidated by challenges and feeling vulnerable in the world is to strengthen our belief in ourselves and trust that our destiny is unfolding is a way that serves our highest good.

The ego is like a student who wants to stay at the same level and keep getting 100%. The soul is engaged and fascinated by learning even though sometimes it is very hard. There is both a thrill and satisfaction in mastering one level and moving on to the next.

When we have faith, we do not need to think so much. We do not have to figure out all the permutations and combinations of every possible outcome. We simply need a solid plan for how we will respond in any event and then get on with living in the moment.

Life does not happen in the past or the future. It can only be lived in the present. Do not dwell on the past; have faith in the future and savour the moment.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, Deep Powerful Change Hypnosis CDs, and new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca

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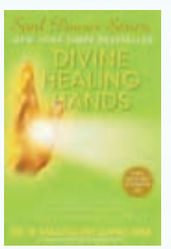

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Cigarette litter - no ifs, ands or butts!

Not long ago, dining out, going for a drink, working in an office, riding an airplane or intercity bus and going to a movie meant being subjected to second-hand smoke. Cigarette smoking was a fact of life and smokers were everywhere – indoors and out.

In many countries, including Canada, that's changed. But it wasn't without a fight... Through a combination of public education and government regulation, including taxation, profound societal change took place over a relatively short time. In 1965, half of Canadians smoked. By 2011, that had dropped to about 17.3 percent, or 4.9-million people, with only about 13.8 percent daily smokers. Unfortunately, the downward trend has levelled off in recent years and tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death in Canada, according to researchers at the University of Waterloo.

With increasing regulation, high cigarette prices driven by "sin taxes" and the current stigma attached to smoking, it's bewildering that people take up the pointless habit in the first place. Smoking prevalence is still highest among young adults, especially those aged 25 to 34, although education is a factor, with smoking rates for university graduates less than half those for people with less education.

I sometimes wonder if it's lack of education that causes many smokers to litter their butts without giving it a second thought. It's astounding how many people who would likely not otherwise drop garbage on the ground see nothing wrong with flicking butts without regard for where they land. It may seem trivial, but it's not.

According to the Surfrider Foundation's Hold on to Your Butt campaign, cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world, with 4.95-trillion tossed onto the ground or water every year. The US spends about $11 billion a year on litter cleanup and 32 percent of that is butts. Washed from the streets into storm drains and rivers, and eventually to oceans, they're the most prevalent type of debris collected in beach cleanups around the world.

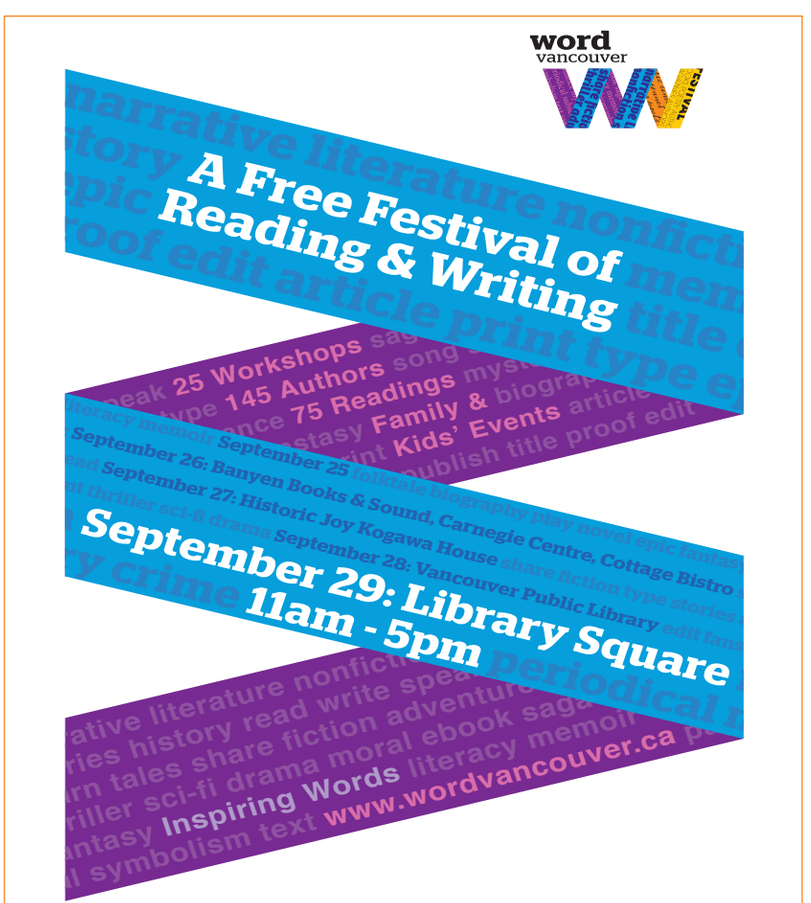
The environmental impacts are nothing to sneeze at either. Surfrider notes that cigarette butts are made of "cellulose acetate, a non-biodegradable plastic, which can take up to 25 years to decompose." The toxic butts can be ingested by children and animals, especially birds and marine animals. Tossed cigarette butts are also a major fire risk.

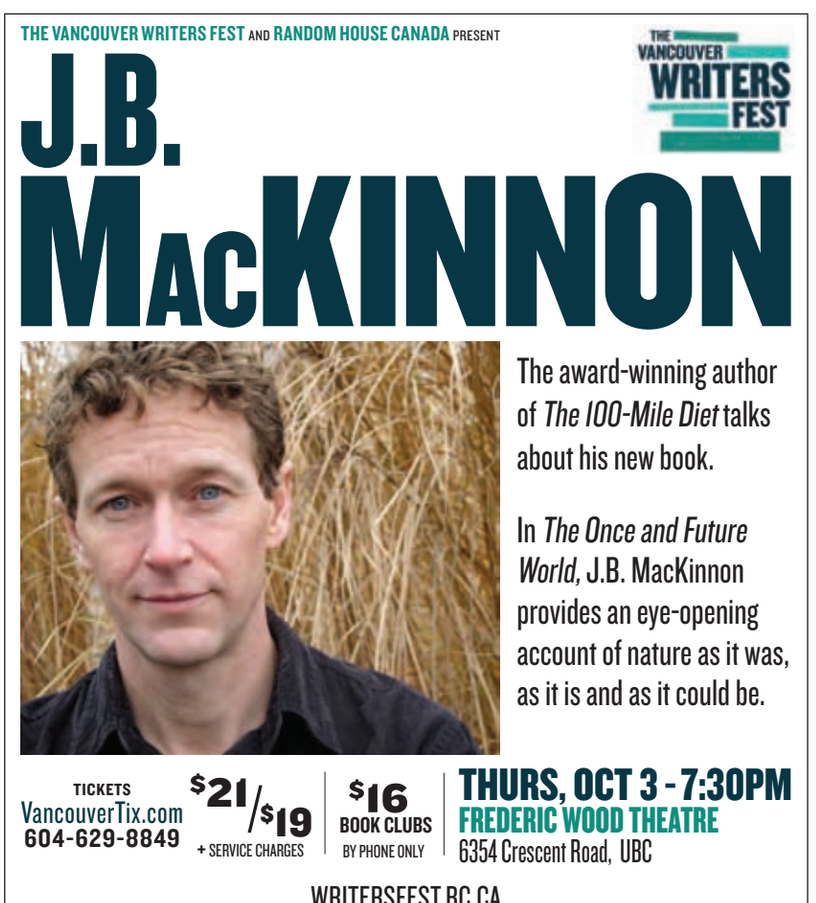
In San Diego, Surfrider installed outdoor ashcans and gave smokers pocket ashtrays. Many places, including Vancouver, have banned smoking on beaches and in parks. Stepping up enforcement of litter laws also helps. Some people even recommend banning filtered cigarettes or at least requiring filters to be biodegradable, arguing they're more of a marketing ploy than a safety feature. In Vancouver and other cities, some people have been pushing for a deposit-and-return system similar to those for bottles and cans...

Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world, with 4.95-trillion tossed onto the ground or water every year.

Some consider tobacco a sacred herb. It's used by many indigenous peoples for ceremonial purposes. With widespread use spurred by marketing, it became a costly and unhealthy addiction and a toxic blight on the environment. Smoking trends in countries like Canada show that societal change is possible and with education and regulation people will do what's best for themselves and for the world around them.

Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Communications Manager **Ian Hanington**. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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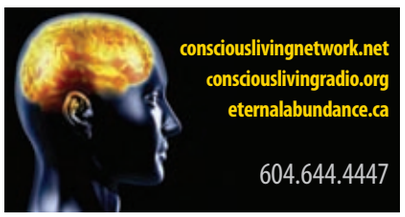

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– Betty Friedan

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– Lester B. Pearson

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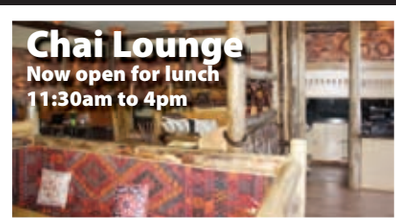

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We all do 'do, re, mi,' but you have got to find the other notes yourself.
– Louis Armstrong

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Artists for Conservation unite on Grouse Mountain

"Up Stream" by Mary Jane Jessen Collage and oil paint on canvas, Adams River Sockeye, BC, Canada

Art at its most significant is a distant early warning system that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen to it.
– Marshall McLuhan

The unfolding drama of whether or not wild salmon will survive humanity's transgressions has heartily engaged me for years, especially since participating in Get-Out Migration in 2010. It was the largest environmental gathering of people and art to ever land on the lawns of the BC Legislature. We demanded that open-net salmon farms – along with their pollution and diseases – be removed from BC's oceans. It was absolutely inspiring.

The upcoming event *Artists for Conservation Festival 2013* (September 27-October 6) at Grouse Mountain has me even more excited. Artists, scientists and activists are uniting, driven by the survival imperative and through an outpouring of compassion and appreciation for our natural world and, ultimately, us. We are a force for change.

Imagine an exhibit and festival at the top of a mountain, featuring the most celebrated nature and wildlife artists in the world, with painters and sketchers gathering for 10 days to share the natural world through their art form – all with an intention to celebrate nature and give artists a platform to champion the environmental cause of their choice. (Over 40% of proceeds support conservation.) The Artists for Conservation Festival promises exactly this. (The event is heavily dependent on an army of volunteers and community supporters.)

The opening night Gala fundraiser will see live sketching of birds of prey: owls, falcons and eagles in the Grouse Mountain chalet. A live auction of these freshly created works will follow. Richard Ellis, celebrated artist, author and researcher at the American Museum of Natural History will deliver the keynote address at the Gala.

Nine days of art and environmental education public events follow on Grouse Mountain. The BC Conservation Symposium on October 3 includes speakers from BC's top environmental organizations; they will lead six panel discussions on environmental challenges. A family weekend is offered October 5-6, with nature immersion and art experiences for under-served and at-risk youth.

The AFC mission is to elevate the conservation agenda in the public dialogue through education and art. AFC is the world's leading artist group supporting the environment with 500 artist members from 27 countries. Its mission is to support wildlife, habitat conservation and environmental education through art that celebrates nature.

Symposium tickets are $85. Most activities are free with Grouse Mountain admission. Tickets are available online for the Gala, a meet-the-artists wine and cheese, the symposium and a two-day workshop by Alberta master artist David Kitler. www.ArtistsforConservation.org/festival

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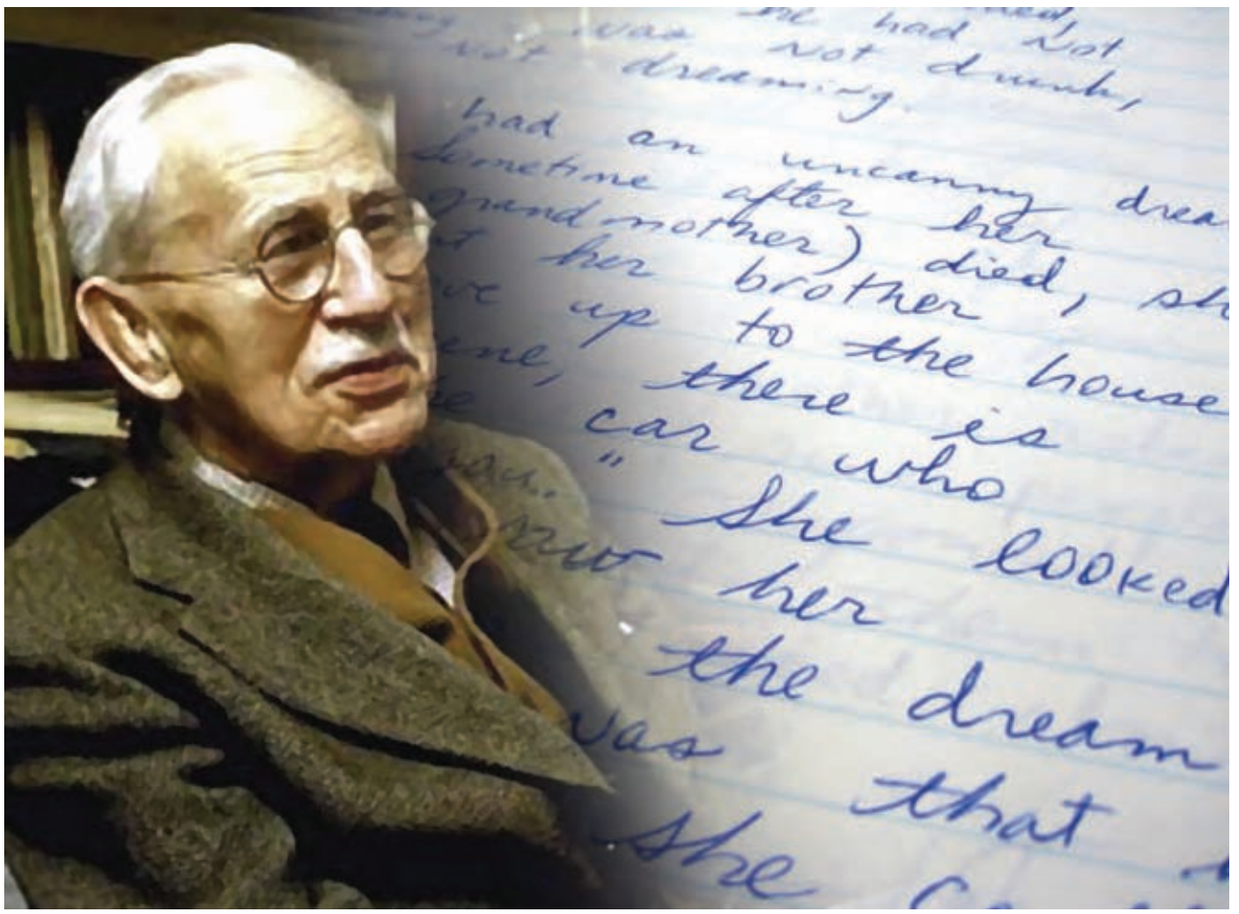
Alister Hardy *Biologist of the soul*



Hardy photo by permission of the Alister Hardy Trust.

Sir Alister Hardy was an unusual combination of nature mystic and rigorous scientist.

Article and illustration by Geoff Olson

A 33 year-old woman is in pain, struggling to give birth. The hospital staff hands her a mirror to watch the child's emergence. "She looked so small, this perfectly formed being with tiny finger and toe nails and little eyelashes," the woman recalled after the storm had passed and the baby lay next to her on a cot. "I could hardly believe that I was responsible for producing such a creature and that she was mine. It was the moments that followed I call my 'religious experience'. I remember saying, 'This is what is happening all over the world at this very moment.' As I said this, I felt a tremendous sense of both wonder at the present moment and unity with humanity. I felt totally and deeply absorbed and immersed, just for a few moments, in a momentous event, a universal but unique experience, giving birth."

Her identity, as an individual female in a particular hospital at a specific time, evaporated. "I was a woman in India, Africa or China or as a part of history. I had taken part in the universal cycle of birth and death and in the struggle for life. It was a totally self-forgetting experience, as I felt part of the immediate whole. I was caught in an intense timeless moment in which I lost my own sense of self identity." (004664)*

A man on a train passing Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa finds himself spontaneously "melting and slipping into the landscape, becoming one with the delight of it all. It was as if I had left my body in the train corridor, but the essence of myself, who I really was, had moved out and become one with everything I had seen, which did not exclude the train itself…" The entire countryside alters in his perception and "everything in it, without exception, simply glowed with numinous light; it seemed no longer to be lit by the sun but by its own internal radiance. Sunlight was not reflected from it, but I myself and everything else seemed to have become light which now interpenetrated and shone through our previously dense physical forms…

"I now saw my life had become a mystery to be expressed, rather than an intellectual/materialistic 'cause and effect' riddle to solve," he wrote of his extraordinary experience, unmediated by drink or drugs. He knew that he could never tell his friends about it, but could he give credence to this "extraordinary energy of love," or would he continue life in his "normal pro-active manipulative way?" (100003)*

These two stories and thousands of other stories of spiritual experiences from religious and non-religious people across the world were elicited by a simple question from a remarkable man. More than 40-years-ago, retired marine biologist Sir Alister Hardy and a team of researchers at Oxford's Manchester College posted notices in national newspapers, asking readers, "Have you ever experienced a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?" There are now over 6,000 accounts from newspaper readers, radio listeners and others who have learned of Hardy's quest, archived at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Alister Hardy was born in 1896, the third son of a successful Nottingham architect. The lanky boy couldn't participate in team sports because of an eye defect that left him bereft of binocular vision, so teachers sent him for long walks in the Northamptonshire countryside to improve both his fitness and his understanding of natural history.

"There was a little lane leading off the Northampton road to Park Wood as it was called and it was a haven for the different kinds of brown butterflies," Hardy recalled in his unpublished autobiography. "I especially liked walking along the banks of various streams watching, as the summer developed, the sequence of wildflowers growing along their brims… I wandered along the banks at times almost with a feeling of ecstasy. There is no doubt that as a boy I was becoming what might be described as a nature mystic. Somehow, I felt the presence of something that was beyond and in way part of all things that thrilled me – the wild flowers and indeed the insects too… Just occasionally, when I was sure no one could see me, I became so overcome with the glory of the natural scene that, for a moment or two, I fell on my knees in prayer – not prayer asking for anything, but thanking God, who felt very real to me, for the glories of his kingdom, and for allowing me to feel them. It was always by the running waterside that I did this, perhaps in front of a great foam of meadowsweet or purple loosestrife."

In 1914, Hardy went up to Oxford University to study Forestry at Exeter College, but the outbreak of war interrupted his studies and after one term he joined the army and was posted to a regiment patrolling the Lincolnshire coast. At the age of 18, he made a promise to what he called God – an intimated divine force rather than an anthropomorphic figure in the sky – that if he survived the war, he would

devote his life to seeking some form of reconciliation between evolutionary theory and human spirituality that would satisfy the academic world.

A committed Darwinist, Hardy was convinced that science and spirituality complemented rather than contradicted one another. Yet he was as quick to reject scholarly reductionism as religious dogmatism. In 1917 he wrote, "How soon, alas, does industrial materialism draw the blinds and shut out the light... The Church has failed – it appeals not to those

At the age of 18, he made a promise to what he called God... that if he survived the war, he would devote his life to seeking some form of reconciliation between evolutionary theory and human spirituality that would satisfy the academic world.

who really make up the nation but to the superstitious, narrow-minded, the lovers of tradition and outward show... A few days ago I went with a kindred spirit to Durham Cathedral to hear 'His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury' preach – I was bitterly disappointed."

After the war, on his return to Oxford, Hardy changed course and began to study zoology. After graduation, Hardy worked as a naturalist in a fisheries laboratory. From 1924 to1928 he was chief zoologist for the Discovery Oceanographic Expedition to the Antarctic. A succession of high-end academic postings followed, finishing with the Linacre Chair of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Oxford, where his enthusiastic students included a young Richard Dawkins. He was knighted for his services to the British fishing industry in 1957. Only upon retirement in 1961 did the esteemed marine biologist and author feel secure enough to openly pursue the vow he made as an 18-year-old boy.

'All my life I have sampled the sea, building up an ecological picture of a hidden world, which I could not examine at first hand, even with an aqualung. In a way, I am casting my nets into a different kind of ocean," he told *The Observer* in 1969.

"Alister Hardy has a legacy and it precedes his work in the study of religion… as just a darn good scientist," notes Dr. Greg Barker, former director of the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales. "He developed this solid, methodological approach to things, but he had this intuition that the most important dimension to life was the spiritual dimension. Being a scientist he really wanted to apply a scientific rigour to this… and he had an intuition that there is a lot going on in religious experience that had nothing to do with the church or institutions.

"Of course he waited until he retired; he didn't want to be seen as a cuckoo by his colleagues because, really, a reductionist Darwinism held force in his day and age. And so if you said there is any other dimension other than a purely biological dimension, you were really dismissed as being a theist or something like that, and he wasn't a theist… and yet he really believed that there was another dimension than purely biological… but it was rooted in our biology," Barker told *Common Ground.*

Hardy argued that spirituality offered an adaptive benefit for the human species, a different approach than the one taken later by his most famous student, Richard Dawkins. A staunch atheist, Dawkins argues in his book *The God Delusion* that, at this stage of cultural evolution, religious experiences and beliefs are maladaptive mass delusions. Was the former student rebelling against his prof's post-retirement paradigm? "Dawkins has never commented on this aspect of Alister Hardy's work. I'm not sure if he even knows about it or if he's holding his tongue about it. Because Hardy was a well-loved teacher and leader in biological sciences at Oxford," Barker offers.

As the American philosopher Daniel Dennett noted in his book, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea,* "Hardy could hardly have been a more secure member of the scientific establishment." A philosopher friend recalled how a fellow once asked him how many things were named after him. "There was a boat in Hong Kong, an octopus, a squid, an island in the Antarctic and – Hardy would add, lowering his voice in a tone of comic embarrassment – two worms." There is also SAHFOS, the Sir Alister Hardy Society for Ocean Science, which continues to monitor near surface plankton across the North Atlantic on a monthly basis using the "continuous plankton recorder," a revolutionary device that Hardy invented nearly 80 years ago. The recorder is critical for assessing the biological health of the oceans and identifying the feeding grounds of whales.

In 1969, the retired professor and Gifford lecturer leveraged his reputation and renown to petition Manchester College at Oxford University for funds and research space to launch his "Religious Experience Research Unit." The college half-heartedly offered Hardy a closed candy shop on the grounds and the rooms above it. It was an inauspicious start to a project that has waxed and waned over the years and continues to this day.

In 1969, the RERU posted the Hardy question – "Have you ever experienced a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?" – in a number of religious publications, including *The Catholic Herald, The Church Times,* and *The Methodist Recorder.* Only 250 replies came through, mostly from elderly women. The aging plankton expert never feared he was chasing phantoms, but now he was concerned he was tracking a phenomenon that was on the wane in a skeptical, secular age.

The research team had much greater success when Hardy used his connections to the mainstream press to post the question in *The Times, The Guardian, The Observer* and the *Daily Mail.* Thousands of responses followed from religious, agnostic and even atheistic readers. Ironically, one of the first findings by Hardy and his team was that churchgoers were less likely than the general population to have spiritual experiences and those that did were likely to be educated, well-balanced, positive people. Surveys since then indicate that although church attendance has been waning over the past 30 years, spiritual experiences are on the rise, particularly among the young.

Since the period of the Enlightenment, philosophers and social scientists have studied religions as a "natural and almost universal human error," noted David Hay, Hardy's close colleague at the RERU, in a 1991 lecture. In contrast, Hardy was convinced, on the basis of his own experience, that human beings have the innate potential to attain some awareness of a transcendent reality. The awareness is rewarding within itself, but it *continued p.39…*

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Updates, outcomes & developments

One of the most common criticisms of corporate mainstream media is that "journalists" focus on and obsess about sensational stories, then move quickly to the next "flavour of the week," rarely providing any follow-up to keep their audiences informed. In this issue of *Common Ground*, Mike Stevens cites a consequence of this sort of coverage – lack of trust.

At *Common Ground*, we will provide ongoing information about people and causes featured in our articles and we also encourage our readers to keep us informed with updates, outcomes and new developments.

Our July issue featured information on GMOs, including the thoughts of Rachel Parent, the 14-year-old activist and founder of Kids Right to Know. Their GMO "Just Label It!" campaign is pushing for mandatory labelling and raising awareness about the risks to health and the environment.

Parent had thrown down the gauntlet for a debate with Kevin O' Leary, a "mulch-millionaire," CBC celebrity and fan of GMOs. Parent promised not to use the word "fascist" if he didn't call her stupid. The much anticipated food fight aired July 31 on the popular 'business' show, *The Lang and O'Leary Exchange*. Clips of the debate went viral, attracting more than 400,000 hits on YouTube within a matter of hours. It also caught the attention of the *Huffington Post*, *New York Daily News*, myriad Internet websites and bloggers galore feasting on the occasion.

A condescending O'Leary worried that Parent was being used as a "shill." However, he eventually acquiesced stating, "OK, Rachel, I give you the labelling. Let's say we mandate everything's labelled, got that. Would you allow companies like Monsanto and many others to try and modify foods to the benefit of all human beings?"

"Are you anti-science, I guess is the question," co-host Amanda Lang interjected.

"I'm not anti-science, but I am for responsible science and ethical progress. Science that's proven safe, not by the very same companies that stand to gain by their [GMO crops] approval," replied Parent, a clear winner, along with CBC, which got yummy ratings.

Observers and pundits agreed the debate was "spirited," giving nod to the cool-headed" Parent. "An excellent primer on the issues surrounding the explosion of foods with DNA altered to include characteristics from other organisms," was the *Huffington Post's* verdict. Make up your own mind by searching for "Internet sensation Rachel Parent" (much better for your health than Miley Cyrus). *Common Ground* will continue to regularly provide information on GMOs and other issues related to food security.

The response to our August issue celebrating the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. was gratifying. Readers took advantage of the opportunity to read King's *I Have a Dream* speech and background and also appreciated the insights of the irrepressible Jack O'Dell, a King adviser, organizer, fund-raiser and strategist. O'Dell is a Vancouver resident and a long-time activist.

Jack O'Dell and wife Jane Power.

At press time, Jack's wife and partner Jane Power told us, "Friends got back in touch after reading the article and we handed out copies on his 90th birthday." She also reported that he continues to assemble his papers for the New York Public Library noting, "Soon, people will have to wear white gloves to read his work."

Readers can also pick up a copy of *Climbin' Jacob's Ladder: The Black Freedom Movement Writings of Jack O'Dell* (University of California Press, 2010, edited by Nikhil Pal Singh). Jack witnessed and fought against everything from apartheid in South Africa to occupied Palestine as well as the "three evils" of poverty, racism and war.

O'Dell has much to say and share on the state of the contemporary world – including his adopted country. Look for more in future issues of *Common Ground*. No white gloves necessary.

Finally, please get involved in growing Mike Stevens' non-profit ArtsCan Circle westward. And let us know what you think and would like to see in upcoming issues; email brucemason@shaw.ca

... ***Invasions*** *from p.9*

War II, which is presented below.

There appears to be something about launching bombs or missiles from afar onto cities and people that appeals to American military and political leaders. In part, it has to do with a conscious desire to not risk American lives in ground combat. And in part, perhaps not entirely conscious, it has to do with not wishing to look upon the gory remains of the victims, allowing American GIs and TV viewers at home to cling to their warm, fuzzy feelings about themselves, their government and their marvelous "family values." Washington officials are careful to distinguish between the explosives the US drops from the sky and "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD), which only the officially designated enemies (ODE) are depraved enough to use. The US government speaks sternly of WMD, defining them as nuclear, chemical and biological in nature and "indiscriminate" (meaning their use can't be limited to military objectives) as opposed to the likes of American "precision" cruise missiles. This is indeed a shaky semantic leg to stand on, given the well-known, extremely extensive damage to non-military targets, including numerous residences, schools and hospitals, even from American "smart" bombs, in almost all of the bombings listed below.

Moreover, Washington does not apply the term "weapons of mass destruction" to other weapons the US has regularly used, such as depleted uranium and cluster bombs, which can be, and often are, highly indiscriminate.

WMD are sometimes further defined as those whose effects linger in the environment, causing subsequent harm to people. This would certainly apply to cluster bombs, and depleted uranium weapons, the latter remaining dangerously radioactive after exploding. It would apply less to "conventional" bombs, but even with those there are unexploded bombs lying around, and the danger of damaged buildings later collapsing. But more importantly, it seems highly self-serving and specious, not to mention exceptionally difficult, to try to paint a human face on a Tomahawk Cruise missile whose payload of a thousand pounds of TNT crashes into the center of a densely-populated city, often with depleted uranium in its warhead.

A terrorist is someone who has a bomb but doesn't have an air force.

The bombing list (Lest we forget)

Korea and China 1950-53 (Korean War)
Guatemala 1954
Indonesia 1958
Cuba 1959-1961
Guatemala 1960
Congo 1964
Laos 1964-73
Vietnam 1961-73
Cambodia 1969-70
Guatemala 1967-69
Grenada 1983
Lebanon 1983, 1984 (both Lebanese and Syrian targets)
Libya 1986
El Salvador 1980s
Nicaragua 1980s
Iran 1987
Panama 1989
Iraq 1991 (Persian Gulf War)
Kuwait 1991
Somalia 1993
Bosnia 1994, 1995
Sudan 1998
Afghanistan 1998
Yugoslavia 1999
Yemen 2002
Iraq 1991-2003 (US/UK on regular basis)
Iraq 2003-present
Afghanistan 2001-present
Pakistan 2007-present
Somalia 2007-8, 2011
Yemen 2009, 2011
Libya 2011

Who's next?

... ***Hardy*** *from p.37*

offers a "strengthening of a sense of relationship with the rest of reality," according to Hay, along with the "spiritual capital" of greater compassion for others.

Unfortunately, Hardy's choice to use the words "religious" and "spiritual" interchangeably has hampered the understanding of his work and the subsequent research to the present day. "Alister persisted to the end in labelling such experience 'religious,' but his own claims for universality make this seem not quite right. People who reject religion are not thereby denied a universal part of human biology, therefore it is less confusing to refer to such experience as 'spiritual' with 'religious' experience as a sub-set within that category," observed David Hay in his magisterial 2011 biography, *God's Biologist: A Life of Alister Hardy.*

"Like the people who write to me, I, too, have the sense of being in touch with something bigger than myself," the professor recounted in a BBC interview in his seventies. "My own religious experiences have been Wordsworthian in feel – the feeling of exaltation at seeing sunlight through young lime trees, for example. I am frankly religious. Of course I don't think of God as "an old gentleman" out there. I do go to church services but they are not necessary to my religion."

Hardy's I-Thou relationship with the natural world and his passionate interest in the objective study of marginalized human experiences seemed aligned much less with fanaticism than with enthusiasm – a word that literally means "a God within."

Since the marine biologist's death in 1985, the Alister Hardy Trust continues his legacy. Its objective is "to make a disciplined and as far as possible scientific investigation into the nature, function and frequency of reports of transcendent or religious experience and spirituality in the human species; to investigate their importance in what it means to be human and to disseminate its findings." The Trust supports two separate bodies: the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience, which publishes a bi-annual journal, *De Numine.*

More on the extraordinary stories from the RERC archives and what they might tell us about ourselves, next month.

*Accounts from the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre archive.

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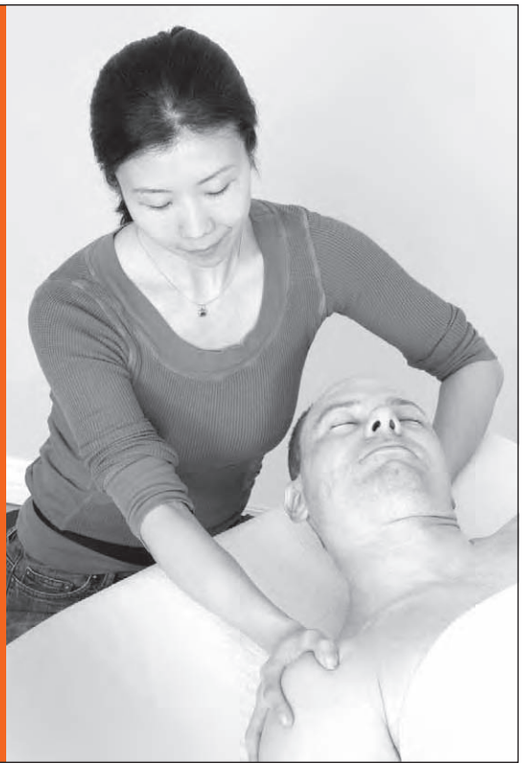

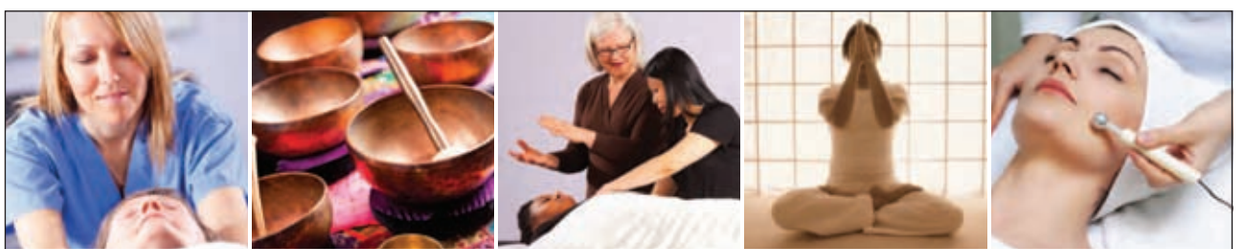

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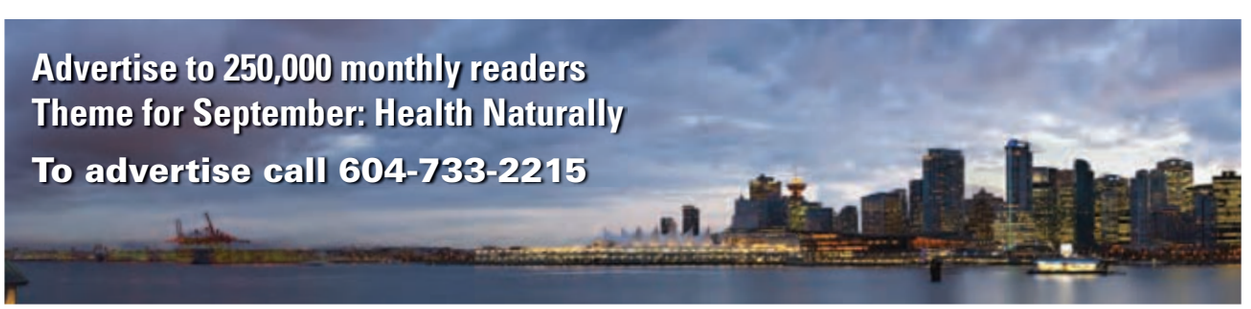

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SEPT 8
J.Krishnamurti in Beyond Myth and Tradition series with Evelyne Blau: The Violent Self. Free DVD showing, dialogue, refreshments. Church of Truth, Victoria, BC. 2PM. Look us up on and register at www.meetup.com/The-British-Columbia-Krishnamurti-Group, krishnamurtigroup@live.com 604-354-1534.

SEPT 11
"Trust Your Intuition" 7-8:30PM, YWCA Hotel 733 Beatty St., Vancouver, $20 + GST at door. Topics: Energy, balance, life purpose, communicating with your angels, psychic gifts, 7-year cycles. Speaker: Mandana Rastan, Inner Peace Movement of Canada (non-profit, educational), www.innerpeacemovement.ca Toll-free: 1-877-969-0095.

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Mediumship Open Circle @ The False Creek Community Centre. Fridays; 6:30-8PM, $75/12 sessions. For information and to register: 604-257-8195; www.falsecreekcc.ca

SEPT 20-22
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Open Your Spiritual Channels with Master Sha. Friday, September 20, 6- 9PM. Sat-Sun, September 21-22, 10AM- 8PM, $250; 1280 Odlum Drive, Vancouver www.lovepeaceharmonybc.com

SEPT 21
Edgar Cayce on the Akashic Records, Relationships & Timelessness by Kevin Todeschi, 9-4:30PM @ Unity of Vancouver, 5840 Oak Street. Online earlybird $69 USD, www.seabc.org/events.htm

SEPT 21
Free Toning and Chanting Event with Sound Healer Nina Shoroplova. 1:30-4:30PM, St. Paul's Church, Labyrinth, 1130 Jervis Street. Donations accepted.

SEPT 21 & SEPT 29
Adam Dreamhealer Workshop "INTEGRATIVE HEALING." Sept 21: Victoria. Sept. 29: Vancouver. Experience Self-Empowerment as ADAM orchestrates 2 unique group healing sessions to activate your healing power. All registration: www.dreamhealer.com

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SEPT 24
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OCT 17, 18, 23, 24
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OCT 22-27
Vancouver Writers Fest 2013 includes Margaret Atwood, Joseph Boyden, Anne Michaels and Eric Schlosser on Granville Island. Visit writersfest.bc.ca

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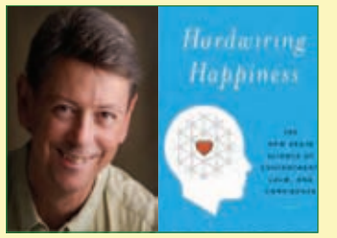

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In Like Father, Like Son, a father learns that the son he has raised was switched at birth with his own biological child.

Our VIFF – global, local, loveable

This has not been the easiest of years for the Vancouver International Film Festival to prepare for. The closure of the Empire Theatres Granville 7, which had provided the Festival with multiple screens in an affordable, central hub for 11 years, presented organizers with a challenge.

Fast forward to September and VIFF is back with a new set of venues: three screens at Cineplex Odeon International Village, SFU's Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, the Vancouver Playhouse and the 1,800-seater Centre for the Performing Arts. Despite concerns that the new owner of the latter venue – the evangelical Westside Church – would not accommodate the annual fall film frenzy, VIFF is programming three films daily there for each of the fest's 16 days, including the opening gala on the 26th. East Van will welcome VIFF's use of the Rio this year while, downtown, the Pacific Cinematheque and VIFF's home base, Vancity Theatre, complete the circuit.

This year's smorgasbord of 350+ films – 200 of them features – includes lauded new films from Cannes like the raw, lesbian romance *Blue Is the Warmest Colour (La vie d'Adèle)*, which won the *Palme d'Or*, and Koreeda Hirokazu's Jury Prize-winning *Like Father, Like Son (Soshite Chichi ni Naru)*, in which a father is forced to question his assumptions about fatherhood after discovering his son is not biologically his.

Ken Loach's documentary *Spirit of '45* provides a warm, nostalgic look at the achievements of post-war Britain, where the Labour government strode out of the rubble of war to reduce national poverty and inequality. With his unabashedly partisan view, Loach weaves a persuasive narrative through the eyes of those who lived it, with copious archive footage that makes socialist wisdom sound like manna from heaven.

Among the environmental documentaries, *The Last Ocean* recounts the struggle to protect the population of toothfish – marketed as "Chilean sea bass" – of the remote and relatively pristine Ross Sea in Antarctica. The great white south is captured in all its icy and fearsome glory, with the loveable penguin population playing a starring role. As marine scientists navigate the layers of government in a bid to establish a conservation zone, international fishing fleets continue to press for access to the area's dwindling bounty. It left me questioning the efficacy of the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) certification.

My sense of desperation probably hit rock bottom watching *A River Changes Course*. Kalyanee Mam's controlled, vérité portrait of three Cambodian families depicts traditional fishing and farming life in collapse. Forests are being torched, rivers fished out and teens are being driven into the low-paid work of migrant labour or garment manufacturers for the West. This is the bootprint of globalization most vividly conveyed.

Gentler on the spirit is *Breathing Earth: Susumu Shingu's Dream*, Thomas Riedelsheimer's account of Japanese windmill artist Susumu Shingu's global quest for a location for his eco village project Breathing Earth. With his oscillating, tumbling sculptures and hypnotic mobiles, he wants to help us re-connect with nature. The doc meanders hither and thither, much like one of the delicate, kinetic contraptions, but the shared fascination of artist and filmmaker in the invisible power of wind is quietly restorative and inspiring.

The full Viff programme goes online at viff.org on September 5. The Vancity Theatre box office (open daily from noon to 7PM) opens on the 14th and the glossy catalogue comes out on September 19.

Robert Alstead writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

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